

I. Project Title: Ruedi Reservoir Releases Public Involvement Plan

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III. Project Summary: Since 1989, Reclamation has released water from Ruedi Reservoir to benefit endangered fish species in the 15 Mile Reach of the Colorado River. Local businesses and residents of Basalt, CO, have expressed concern that when these releases to the local Fryingpan River (which feeds into the Colorado) exceed 250 cfs, the Fryingpan's gold-medal fishery is adversely impacted. Basalt's economy is based on the fishery reputation and resulting tourism. However, in managing Ruedi to meet multi-purpose needs of the Fryingpan-Arkansas Project of which Ruedi is a part, Reclamation's Eastern Colorado Area Office (who owns and operates Ruedi) must periodically release flows greater than 250 cfs. To promote understanding of the Colorado River Recovery Program, the Fry-Ark Project, and to help address stakeholder concerns, the ECAO maintains an open and continuous dialogue with local businesses and residents.

IV. Study Schedule: 1995-present

V. Relationship to RIPRAP: Action Plan item 1.A.4c(1)(b)

VI. Accomplishment of FY 2000 Tasks and Deliverables, Discussion of Initial Findings and Shortcomings:

Tasks: The ECAO timely disseminated information on related activities, including meetings, through news releases, frequent e-mail notifications, customer request responses, and public notifications. We held two public meetings in May to address releases under the Recovery Program, a proposed agreement under the Programmatic Biological Opinion, and general Ruedi Reservoir operations.

Our main goal in FY 2000 was to address concerns voiced by the public at last year's public meeting. We did our best to respond to those concerns. In FY 2000 we:

- 1) Conducted a year-in-review presentation: what happened at Ruedi last year (FY99) compared to what is happening this year (FY00) (for perspective).
- 2) Had a natural resource specialist from Reclamation attend the annual meeting to provide answers to the more environmentally based questions.

3) Held the public meetings IN BASALT instead of asking the public to drive 45 minutes to Glenwood Springs. As a result, our public attendance nearly doubled for the first meeting.

Our second goal for this year was to promote the “Year 2012” Agreement to provide 10,825 acre-feet a year of water to benefit the endangered fish. The Agreement is an action in the RIP and the PBO. We did our best to explain the new proposed agreement and its benefits to the public. The result was several articles in the *Glenwood Post*, *Grand Junction Sentinel*, *Aspen Times*, and the *Aspen Daily News*.

Discussion of Initial Findings and Shortcomings:

In addition to our annual Ruedi Reservoir Operations meeting we hold for the public, we also held a public meeting to introduce the proposed Year 2012 Agreement. This additional meeting gave us a new insight.

The proposed Year 2012 Agreement meeting was held first, on May 10 and had 32 participants. We learned from this meeting that despite our public involvement efforts, the public in Basalt largely misunderstood many of the finer points of the Recovery Program. Misinformation was widespread concerning timing, quantities, regularity, and purposes of releases to the Fryingspan from Ruedi Reservoir. The misinformation that seemed prevalent surprised us because articles over the past year and other media coverage had been very accurate.

We learned, once again, that word of mouth is the best or worst PR an agency can have. Word of mouth in Basalt has not been up-to-par with the information our office has provided.

To address this, we made an effort to corner the source of the problem and found it along the riverside businesses in Basalt. What had been local gossip about Ruedi and the Recovery Program gained national coverage when one shop “leaked” complaints about Ruedi operations and the Recovery Program to a popular web-site: Virtual Flyshop.

Fortunately, Virtual Flyshop’s headquarters are located on this side of the mountains, close to our office. We were able to schedule an appointment with the publishers and web master to present an hour-long informational. Two days later a retraction and more complete article on Ruedi Reservoir’s purpose, operations, involvement in the Recovery Program, and the proposed Year 2012 Agreement appeared on the website. It is still available today.

Despite this breakthrough in communications with the flyfishing industry, we had several shortcomings. Some of the requests made at last year’s public meetings have not yet been implemented. We have not:

- 1) Distributed an evaluation at the end of the season (October) to "randomly selected" stakeholders to assess "What Would You Like to see Covered at the Spring Meeting?"

- 2) Distributed evaluation forms post-meeting for comments from "randomly selected" stakeholders for a more thorough assessment of our performance.
- 3) Been able to get appropriate individuals from DOW to attend and respond to specific wildlife questions.
- 4) Set-up a 1-800 number for Ruedi updates so information is more readily accessible. This could be handier for the public than e-mail updates. It depends on how many more people have phones than e-mail.

Of these, items #1, #2, and #3 are definite possibilities for 2001. Item #4 may not be necessary due to the frequency and wide circulation of e-mail notifications and our continued work with the Roaring Fork Conservancy—a Basalt non-profit agency dedicated to local environmental issues.

VII. Recommendations: We did not receive any written suggestions from the public this year. However, based on our experiences with the public meetings, Virtual Flyshop, the Roaring Fork Conservancy, and the success of our e-mail notification system, we intend to focus on lessons learned in 2000: maintain communications with not only local businesses, but their support industries; and keep the public up-to-date as often as possible on the progress of the Year 2012 Agreement. We will also continue to work on implementing items #1-3 for public meetings. Based on the responses we receive from our evaluation forms, we will determine whether or not #4, the 1-800 phone number, will be an effective tool in future communications. Lastly, we will also improve our public notification and celebration of achievements in the Program, like the 2012 Agreement.

Many of the above recommendations can be accommodated by the time of our annual public meeting, which we be held in late spring, 2001.

VIII. Project Status: Ongoing

IX. FY00 Budget Status:

A. Funds Provided: \$0

B. Funds Expended: n/a

C. Difference: n/a

D. Percent of the FY00 work completed and projected costs to complete (continue):

FY99: n/a

Continuing: n/a

E. Recovery Program funds spent for publication charges: n/a

X. Status of Data Submission: n/a

XI: Signed:

Kara Lamb

12/8/00

Kara Lamb
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Date

